What is claimed is:

1. An aggregation engine for use in aggregating demands according to an aggregation rule comprising:

a demand processor, said demand processor being outfitted so as to process demands into groups based upon said aggregation rule;

a group builder, said group builder being outfitted so as to compare incoming demands to existing groups, if one of said demands matches one of said existing groups, assigning a group ID to said one of said demands that is associated with said one of said existing groups, if said one of said demands does not match any of said existing groups, creating a new group and assigning a new group ID associated with the new group to said one of said demands; and

a rule engine, said rule engine being outfitted so as to build said aggregation rule according to predetermined parameters.

2. An aggregation engine according to claim 1, wherein said aggregation rule is a product ID rule.

3. An aggregation engine according to claim 1, wherein said aggregation rule is a classification-based rule.

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4. An aggregation engine according to claim 3, wherein said aggregation rule supports a UN/SPSC classification.

5. An aggregation engine according to claim 3, wherein said aggregation rule supports an eclass classification.

6. An aggregation engine according to claim 3, wherein said aggregation rule supports hierarchical classifications.

7. An aggregation engine according to claim 1, wherein said aggregation engine receives said predetermined parameters from another application.

8. An aggregation engine according to claim 7, wherein said another application comprises a demand aggregation application.

9. An aggregation engine according to claim 7, wherein said aggregation engine receives said predetermined parameters in an XML-based format.

10. An aggregation engine according to claim 1, wherein said aggregation engine converts units of said demands

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prior to outputting said groups to another application.

11. A process of aggregating demands comprising the steps of:

validating incoming data so as to ensure said data is valid;

processing said incoming data so as to extract an aggregation rule and at least one demand;

processing said aggregation rule so as to apply said aggregation rule against said at least one demand to create at least one group based upon said aggregation rule;

outputting output data indicative of said at least one group.

12. A process of aggregating demands as in claim 11, wherein said incoming data is XML based.

13. A process of aggregating demands as in claim 12, wherein said output data is XML based.

14. A process of generating purchase orders through the aggregation of shopping baskets of demands comprising the steps of:

selecting said shopping baskets to be aggregated;

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building groups of said shopping baskets based upon an aggregation rule;

assigning a unique group ID for each of said groups;

storing said group IDs;

generating at least one purchase order based upon at least one of said group IDs.

15. A process of generating purchase orders as in claim 14, further comprising the step of determining said aggregation rule to be applied to said shopping baskets.

16. A process of generating purchase orders as in claim 14, further comprising the steps of:

determining if any attributes of said demands within said shopping baskets are missing; and

if said attributes are missing, acquiring said attributes from another source.

17. A process of creating coalitions of demands comprising the steps of:

creating a process ID to identify a process through which said coalitions are to be created;

creating groups of demands based upon an application of an aggregation rule;

assigning a unique group ID for each group created and assigning said process ID to said demands;

assigning said demands to said coalitions based upon said group IDs;

once a predetermined time period has passed, closing said coalitions.

18. A process of creating coalitions of demands as in claim 17, further comprising the step of permitting manual addition of additional demands to said coalitions.

19. A process of creating coalitions of demands as in claim 17, further comprising the step of permitting coalitions to be manually closed prior to said predetermined time period passing.

20. A process of creating coalitions of demands as in claim 17, wherein said aggregation rule is a classification-based rule.

21. A process of creating coalitions of demands as in claim 17 further comprising the steps of:

determining if any attributes of said demands are missing; and

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if said attributes are missing, acquiring said attributes from another source.

22. A process of grouping demands manually input into a system by a user into coalitions of demands comprising the steps of:

inputting demands into a demand aggregation application;

analyzing said demands by applying an aggregation rule;

if said analysis of said demands indicates that said demands meet criteria of one or more of said coalitions, proposing said one or more of said coalitions to said user;

permitting said user to assign said demands to said one or more of said coalitions;

if said analysis of said demands indicates that said demands do not meet criteria of one or more of said coalitions, automatically creating a new coalition to accommodate said demands.

23. A process of grouping demands as in claim 22, further comprising the steps of:

determining if any attributes of said demands are missing; and

if said attributes are missing, acquiring said attributes from another source.

24. A process of aggregating demands according to an aggregation rule comprising the steps of:

    collecting demands from a plurality of sources;

    creating groups of demands based upon an application of said aggregation rule;

    forwarding said demands to a demand aggregation application.

25. A process of aggregating demands as in claim 24, further comprising the steps of:

    determining if any attributes of said demands are missing; and

    if said attributes are missing, acquiring said attributes from another source.